



River sojourn

Todd Stell of Elverson, left, and Jane Fox, of East Berlin, paddle down the Delaware River as they and about 60 others take part in the annual Delaware River Sojourn Monday. The trek began in Pond Eddy, N.Y., and will finish Saturday in Philadelphia.

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Canoeists and kayakers make their way down the river during last weekend's Delaware River Sojourn. Below, the author meets the river.

Reflections by Sojourner Emily Lewinski, who calls home the cornfields of Indiana:

"The bright sunshine danced like diamonds upon the water as it rippled gently against the canoe sides, the massive rocks and lush growth of the mountain loomed high above me, and ospreys flew majestically overhead. Instantly, I felt admiration for the many strangers who had put their business on hold and took a break in their everyday lives to celebrate the national treasure by connecting personally with the river and its beauty for eight days.

... I understand the local pride and significance of the Delaware River after spending only a few hours on the waterway. Its historical significance and natural wonder struck me in a way that I will never forget."

Midwesterner discovers the Delaware

By EMILY LEWINSKI
For the Pocono Record

The closest I have ever been to the Delaware River was in the history textbook account of Gen. Washington's famous crossing on Christmas night in 1776 to win a decisive victory over the British during the Revolutionary War.

That would all soon change. Canoe, check. Paddles, check. Life vest, check.

I hopped in my canoe and began my journey, along with 60 other adventurers, down "Pennsylvania's 2002 Feature River of the Year" for one leg of the week-long Delaware River Sojourn on June 3.

Being from the cornfields of Indiana, I had two goals in mind: not capsizing, and keeping up with the 8-year-old boy navigating his own kayak down the river.

Although not lofty goals, I felt it was an appropriate way to measure my success on the water.

After pushing off at Kittatinny Point, my canoe gently glided down the river without much paddling effort on my part. At this point I had the opportunity to take in the beauty of the Delaware Water Gap.

I could not help but think the whole scene was picturesque. The bright sunshine danced like diamonds upon the water as it rippled gently against the canoe sides, the massive rocks and lush growth of the mountain loomed high above me,



and ospreys flew majestically overhead.

Instantly, I felt admiration for the many strangers who had put their business on hold and took a break in their everyday lives to celebrate the national treasure by connecting personally with the river and its beauty for eight days.

Although the majority of us on the river were strangers, a fellow sojourner pointed out that "on the river we were all friends."

Men and women from all over the state and country chatted with one another about their own river stories, offering facts and asking questions about the area while floating along side one another.

Our leisurely travel was quickly interrupted by the lead boat. We were all informed by our guide that the

upcoming whitewater was rough, and we were advised as to how to handle it.

I tensed as we approached. Helpful commands from the stern of my canoe and surrounding sojourners were shouted telling me to take a position on my knees to maintain a secure center of gravity.

While going through the rapids I was told to "Paddle right! Paddle Left! Keep Paddling!"

Finally, I reached the other side of the rough water and could not contain a feeling of pride that I had in fact remained in the boat.

Only a half mile farther down the river a greater challenge stood between me and the takeout destination at Reliant Energy Access in Martins Creek.

More rapids. Bigger rapids. I approached the bumpy

water with the previous instructions in mind. The water was so rough at this point that it was flowing over the front of the boat, and I struggled to keep my paddles in the water.

Eventually I reached the end of my 4.5-mile trek, where our canoes were loaded and transported to the next day's kickoff point.

Even though my skin had been sunkissed, I was wet from head to toe, and I had a feeling of stiffness in my biceps, I could only think of memories of the Delaware's beauty.

The sojourn steering committee's goal was to instill appreciation of the river's historic past and improve its economic vitality and environmental health.

Along with successfully completing my personal goals for a day of navigating the water, the sojourn was successful as well.

Although I was born and raised in Indiana, I understand the local pride and significance of the Delaware River after spending only a few hours on the waterway. Its historical significance and natural wonder struck me in a way that I will never forget.

Emily Lewinski, a student at DePauw University in Indiana, is working at the Pocono Record this summer through a scholarship program at DePauw.

Pocono Record photos by David Kidwell